

Basic Set up for a Tunnel Car Wash to Optimize Clean and Customer Experience

Part 1 of 2

“...the trifecta for ensuring a clean, shiny, and dry vehicle...with every wash!”



To ensure optimal chemical performance in a tunnel car wash, it is important to make sure all chemicals being used are balanced throughout the whole wash process. Balanced means more than making sure you are using the correct ratio or dilution of product. It also means making sure you are using the correct product for each function based on its location of the application, and proper pH levels and water usage. The goal is to achieve a clean, shiny, dry vehicle after it leaves the tunnel.

In this article, Part 1 of 2 you will learn the basic set up for a tunnel car wash to optimize clean and customer service.

Tire & Wheel Cleaning

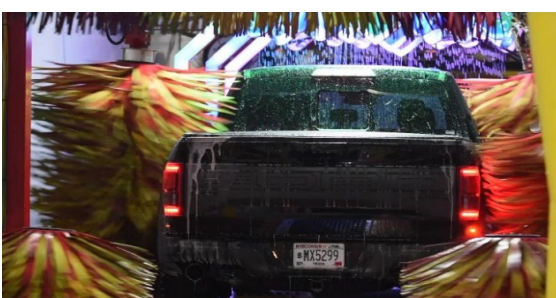
Choosing which type of products to use has many factors for consideration, but typically the first set of CTA's is a high pH cleaner. A high pH cleaner attacks organic soils like road film and dirt. If you have 2 sets of CTA's then the second set will apply a low pH cleaner. The low pH cleaner will aid in loosening and removing inorganic matter like brake dust and rust deposits.



Choosing the type of applicator to apply both types of cleaners should be one that completely covers the entire tire with foam. Adding dwell time in between the application and the rinsing stage will aid in cleaning. Also, make sure you are using a product that not only cleans, but is safe for both OEM wheels and after-market.

Presoak

Typically, in a tunnel, the first application is your presoak arch. This is normally a high pH presoak applied through a low-volume K-Nozzle style applicator. The purpose of this function is to achieve comprehensive coverage of the entire vehicle.



A high pH presoak is an alkaline product designed to loosen and start the breakdown of organic soils.

Soap Foamers

Next, the vehicle receives an application of low pH detergent or shampoo. There are many different types of applicators used for this process, but the goal is to apply a thick layer of foam on the vehicle. There are many benefits to using a low pH detergent. First, it adds lubrication for the cloth in the tunnel and it starts lowering the pH of the vehicles surface. In fact, this function can be considered the first step of the drying process.



Some tunnel car washes have additional applications for soap foamers. They are typically used to lubricate wraps. This application can be a low pH or a neutral product, but both are applied through a high foaming applicator.

Triple Foam

There are two types of triple foam commonly used in a tunnel car wash: conditioners, and polishes. The location of the triple foam applications will be a determining factor in product choice. If the applicators are in the “cleaning” section of the tunnel, then the conditioners are preferred.



If located later in the tunnel, then polishes are recommended. Low pH conditioners assist in cleaning while lowering the pH of the vehicle's surface. Polishes add a shine and protection to the vehicle's surface.

Choosing the incorrect type of triple foam could lead to rinsing and drying issues.

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Sealant

Sealants are applied at the end of the process, typically as the penultimate step. In some cases, this application gives the operator/owner an opportunity to eliminate a drying agent when a sealant is applied. The purpose of this application is to enhance drying, improve the shine, and provide a longer lasting protection to the entire vehicles surface using a synthetic polymer. Typically, this application will last 2-4 days, depending upon the weather.

Drying Agent

The final chemical application makes the water bead on the vehicle's surface. This is also referred to as the “water break” that easily allows the blowers to remove the water off the vehicle. Performance issues can occur if the incorrect amount of drying agent is used. Additionally, the proper use of high and low pH detergents in the wash process can improve the performance of this application. Correctly preparing the vehicle surface for this application will produce a drier car.



Therefore, the optimal chemical performance in a tunnel car wash is based on what types of products your wash offers, their location for complimentary effectiveness, and the process in which they are applied. This balance makes up the trifecta for ensuring a clean, shiny, and dry vehicle...with every wash!

Stay tuned for Part 2...providing more detail for how to customize your wash with specialty products and applications unique to your geography and customer.

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